

## OPINION COLUMNISTS

# Tim Bench: You'll find what you're looking for at the book sale



*Posted: 3:00 a.m.*

Like many of you, I love books. So I've been a patron of the annual Friends of the Abilene Public Library book sale for several years now.

My primary interests are the theology-related selections, as well as both Texas and local history. Because of that love, I have served in a variety of volunteer roles at the sale for the past few years — sorting donated books, helping move boxes of books and materials, helping set up topic-specific tables of books at the sale itself.

I originally was invited to the sale several years ago by Zach Gordon, a friend who was aware of my ongoing interest in theological reading. In 2010, Zach invited me to come down and "take a look" at what the book sale had to offer ... needless to say, I left that summer day from the Abilene Civic Center with several bags of books! My purchases were even wheeled out to my car by volunteers with the help of a shiny red wagon. I also witnessed a scene that first year I

will never forget — an Abilene teacher at the sale purchasing masses of children's books, at her own expense, to provide reading and learning materials for the young students in her classroom.

I have witnessed church leaders as they attempt to acquire specific books to fill their libraries, college students as they attempt to acquire specific materials for their major field of study, hobbyists adding to their specific interest collection, and single mothers purchasing books for their preschool children. The interests are as wide and diverse as the people who attend.

The book sale truly draws people from across West-Central Texas from all walks of life, from multiple backgrounds, from various demographics, all with a shared interest — A passion for and love of books.

I now eagerly anticipate the book sale each year, both in terms of acquiring new books and materials for my own private use, but to also participate with so many Abilenians who are likewise involved. Many of those whom I have met over the past few years via library-related efforts I now consider friends — Matt Preston, Carrie Casada, Amanda Shelnett, Janis Test, Sheila Baggett and others. It is amazing on a year-by-year basis to see the number of local residents who so happily donate their time, efforts, and books to this sale; proceeds from the sale help to fund ongoing library programs throughout the year, serving the people of both Abilene and the Big Country. This is an event that all in Abilene can participate in and can take great pride in, as well.

This annual event cannot be successful without the invaluable and ongoing support of Abilenians, and we certainly hope that our longtime (and new) friends will plan on joining us at the Civic Center starting Thursday through the June 19; if you are not already a Friend and supporter, you are cordially invited to join us and introduce yourself! If there is a book title you are looking for, or an interest in a

specific field, the book sale is a great venue!

It is also my great honor and privilege to be chairman of the annual book sale for 2017. I certainly hope to carry on the great efforts and leadership of Matt, and I am very confident that with such a wonderful group of volunteers, supporters, donors, and partners, the Friends of the Library can continue to develop and promote this annual event to even greater heights of success.

We hope that you will plan to attend the sale, and will likewise help support the year-round efforts of your public library. It is only through the support of our friends and supporters that the library can provide the programs and services offered, both at the existing branches as well as the new Mall of Abilene location. Please plan to drop by the Civic Center to do some shopping, and I would certainly like to meet as many folks as possible during the sale.

I am always open to suggestions, comments and ideas from you about how together, as a community, we can strive to make this sale even more productive and more beneficial to supporters each year.

*Tim Bench is a member of the board of Friends of the Abilene Public Library.*

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